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Q3(a)

Capitalism has brought increasing informalisation of work in society. Substantiate your answer.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- Capitalism has brought increasing informalisation of work in society. Substantiate your answer
- Keep the substantiation within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Capitalism cheapens labour by expanding uncovered, insecure work.

Marx's reserve army and subcontracting are the mechanisms.

Hart and **Breman** refute the leftover story.

Women's home-based work and gig apps show the present.

- **PLFS**: a small regular core, a large informal majority.
- **Increasing**: flexibility as competitive strategy, not only persistence of farms.

Introduction

Capitalism did not only build the formal factory. It also produces insecure, uncovered work as a flexible shell around the core. Informalisation is increasing where contracts thin, chains lengthen, and platforms rent labour without employing it. The claim can be substantiated.

Body

Why capitalism informalises

- **Karl Marx's** reserve army and the need to cheapen labour explain expulsion from the protected core.
- Profit seeks to shed social security. Subcontracting and piece-rates push risk down the chain, which world-system writers after A. G. Frank also mapped globally.
- **Max Weber's** formal organisation exists; capital uses it for some and denies it to others.

Historical substantiation

- Keith **Hart** named the informal sector; Jan **Breman** showed Indian circular migrants as the normal capitalist labour process, not a pre-modern leftover.
- Deindustrialisation in the North replaced mill jobs with casual services. Daniel Bell's post-industrial hope missed this.

- Export garment and electronics chains rest on home-based and workshop labour, much of it women, as feminist labour studies show.

Indian and platform evidence

- **PLFS** and **Census** class-of-worker data show a large self-employed and casual majority beside a small regular-wage sliver.
- Gig apps present a fetish of self-employment while controlling time and rating, a Marxist appearance with a Weberian digital cage.
- SEWA's constituency grew because the form grew.

Increasing, not only persistent

- **Formalisation drives can coexist with new informal layers:** contractors inside "formal" firms.
- Global competition after liberalisation rewarded flexibility more than the standard employment relation.

Qualification

- Some sectors still formalise. The trend the question names is the expanding insecure shell, not the death of every factory Act.

Flow diagram

Capitalist accumulation -> Shed security
 Shed security -> Informalisation
 Global subcontract -> Informalisation
 Platforms -> Informalisation
 Formal core -> Shed security

Conclusion

Capitalism increases informalisation by using uncovered labour as a cheap, flexible condition of accumulation. **Marx**, **Hart**, **Breman**, and feminist home-work studies substantiate the mechanism. Indian **PLFS** and gig platforms substantiate the present. The factory was never the whole of capitalist work; it is less of it now.

Facts & figures

Marx

Reserve army and the cheapening of labour-power as capitalist tendencies.

Hart

Informal sector as an urban capitalist phenomenon.

Breman

Footloose labour in India as central to accumulation.

PLFS

Periodic labour-force survey showing dominance of informal status.

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